



M E D I A R E L E A S E
STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VIRGIN FALLS HIKE SLATED FOR MARCH 15

Nashville, Tenn. - The Department of Environment and Conservation's Division of Natural Areas will host a guided hike at Virgin Falls State Natural Area in White County near Sparta on March 15. Participants should meet at 7 a.m. in the Kroger parking lot at 5544 Old Hickory Boulevard in Hermitage.

Stewardship Ecologist Forrest Evans will take hikers on a strenuous eight-mile trail to the falls. This trail descends from the Cumberland Plateau and meanders along a creek, offering spectacular views of caves, sinks and waterfalls. Participants will stop for lunch at the falls, where they also can feast their eyes on a truly remarkable sight. Water cascades from a cave mouth at the top of a bluff, falls more than 100 feet and is swallowed by a sinkhole to form Virgin Falls.

"The area is noted for its unique geological features and its many waterfalls," Evans said. "In addition to Virgin Falls, visitors will find great views of Big Laurel, Sheep Cave and Big Branch waterfalls. The Caney Fork Overlook alone is worth the hike, as it provides a dramatic view of Scott's Gulf and the Caney Fork River some 900 feet below."

Participants should bring water and snacks, and they should wear appropriate footwear and dress in layers. Reservations are required for the guided hike and can be made by contacting Forrest Evans by phone at (615) 532-0431 or by e-mail at forrest.evans@state.tn.us by March 13. The hike will be cancelled in the event of rain or if rain is predicted. Participants are advised not to attempt this hike unless they are in good physical condition and able to negotiate difficult trail situations.

Virgin Falls State Natural Area is a 1,157-acre wilderness located on the Cumberland Plateau. Its deep gorges are heavily wooded and ecologically diverse, supporting various aged second-growth mixed mesophytic and oak-hickory forest. The area also is remarkable for its many karst features - typical of the geology of the Plateau. Both the forests and geological features make Virgin Falls State Natural Area one of Tennessee's favorite destinations.

The hike at Virgin Falls is part of a series of monthly, guided field trips to Tennessee State Natural Areas offered by the department's Division of Natural Areas. Tennessee has 77 designated State Natural Areas throughout the state, covering approximately 110,000 acres of ecologically significant lands. More information about Tennessee's natural areas program, including a complete list of all natural areas and scheduled field trips, can be found at <http://state.tn.us/environment/na/>.

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